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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: EU UNEMPLOYMENT UP TO 7.6 PERCENT; EURO ZONE RATE UP TO
8.2 PERCENT

¶1. SUMMARY. The latest EU unemployment data as released by the EU Commission's Statistical Office (EUROSTAT) on February 27 provide another confirmation that the current economic downturn is having a dramatic impact on the situation of the EU labor markets. The aggregate unemployment rate for the EU-27 reached 7.6 percent in January 2009 (up from 7.5 percent in December). Unemployment in the euro zone (EU countries participating in the euro) increased to 8.2 in January 2009, also up by 0.1 percentage point over the previous month. END SUMMARY.

¶2. With seasonal adjustment and compensation for differences in national statistical methods, the unemployment rate for the EU-27 stood at 7.6 percent in January 2009, up from 7.5 percent in December 2008 (revised upward from initial 7.4 estimate) and from 6.8 percent in January 2008. The unemployment rate for the euro zone stood at 8.2 percent in January 2009, up from 8.1 percent in December 2008 (also revised upward from initial figure) and from 7.3 percent in January 2008 (comparison based on EU-16; euro zone membership effective in January 2009).

¶3. The lowest monthly rates among those compiled by EUROSTAT from the EU-27 for January 2009 were recorded in the Netherlands (2.8 percent) and Austria (4.0 percent). The highest rates were recorded in Spain (14.8 percent) and Latvia (12.3 percent).

¶4. EUROSTAT noted that six countries among the EU-27 recorded a decrease in their unemployment rate over a year and nineteen an increase, while two recorded no change. The most significant decreases (January-to-January comparison) occurred in Poland (from 8.0 percent to 6.7 percent) and Bulgaria (from 6.1 percent to 5.3 percent), while spectacular increases occurred in Latvia (from 6.2 percent to 12.3 percent) and Spain (from 9.0 percent to 14.8 percent).

¶5. Based on EUROSTAT estimates, male unemployment reached 7.5 percent in January 2009 for the EU-27 and 7.9 percent for the euro zone, up 1.2 percentage point and 1.4 percentage point respectively when compared to January 2008. The female unemployment rate over the same period reached 7.8 percent for the EU-27 and 8.6 percent for the euro zone, up 0.4 percentage point in both areas over the twelve-month period.

¶6. Unemployment rates among young people under 25 for January 2008 ranged from 5.5 percent in the Netherlands and 7.9 percent in Austria to 30.4 percent in Spain and 22.9 percent in both Hungary and Sweden. The January 2009 rate for this age group was estimated at 17.0 percent for the EU-27 and at 16.9 percent for the euro zone, compared to 14.7 percent and 14.6 percent respectively (plus plus 2.3 percentage point in both areas) for January 2008.

¶7. EUROSTAT estimated that 18.412 million were unemployed in the EU-27 in January 2009, of which 13.036 million in

the euro zone. In absolute numbers, the number of unemployed increased by 2,194,000 for the EU-27 and by 1,641,000 for the euro zone over the twelve-month period.

18. Following is the breakdown of unemployment rates in ascending order for the individual EU member states:

(Seasonally-adjusted)

(January 2009 rates unless otherwise indicated)

Netherlands	2.8
Austria	4.0
Denmark	4.3
Cyprus	4.3
Slovenia	4.9
Czech Republic	5.0
Luxembourg	5.1
Bulgaria	5.3
Romania	5.8 (third quarter 2008)
Malta	6.0
UK	6.2 (November 2008)
Finland	6.6
Italy	6.7 (third quarter 2008)
Poland	6.7
Belgium	7.2
Germany	7.2
Sweden	7.4
Greece	7.5 (third quarter 2008)
Portugal	8.1
France	8.3
Estonia	8.6
Hungary	8.6

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Ireland	8.8
Lithuania	9.8
Slovakia	9.8
Latvia	12.3
Spain	14.8

EU-27	7.6
Euro zone	8.2

19. The monthly rates and numbers of unemployed are estimated and based on data from the EU labor force survey. The estimated rates may differ from national unemployment rates due to differences in methods and definitions of unemployment. Unemployed people according to ILO criteria are those aged 15 and over who:

-- Are without work;

-- Are available to start work within the next two weeks; and

-- Have actively sought employment at some time during the previous four weeks.

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